

APPROVED BY BOARD OF SELECTMEN

**TOWN OF DARIEN
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
JULY 19, 2004**

ATTENDANCE: First Selectwoman Evonne Klein; Dr. Joseph Miceli; Linda Santarella; Robert F. Harrel, Jr.; Barbara Thorne

STAFF: John Crary, Town Administrator

OTHERS: Peter Maglathlin, High School Building Project; Bob Steeger and Tim Tully, DPW; Art Van Sciver, Sewer Commission; Kent Haydock, Deer Management Committee; Tom Geary, Downtown Darien Committee; Cheryl Russell, RTM Chairman Park & Recreation Committee

CALL TO ORDER

First Selectwoman Klein called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

FIRST SELECTWOMAN'S REPORT

First Selectwoman Klein said that she had a status meeting regarding emergency management, and to find out if there was anything more that could be done. She said she was pleased to report that Darien is in good shape. She said that progress continues to obtain a radio license so that Darien would be able to communicate with the region.

Traffic

Regarding the traffic situation, First Selectwoman Klein said that she met with the Police Commission to discuss possible solutions. Traffic congestion continues to be a problem for everyone.

Shellfish Policy

First Selectwoman Klein said that she would meet again with members of the Shellfish Commission to discuss shellfish in the beds.

Downtown Committee

As it related to the downtown committee, a report would be forthcoming from the Main Street consultant. The last meeting was held on July 6th.

Senior News

On January 26th the RTM voted that elderly property owners would qualify for tax relief if the property was valued at \$800,000 or less. First Selectwoman Klein said that there are about 872 citizens that are in this bracket; she said that she received a letter asking what the status about this. For those with higher property values, she asked what the answer should be.

DOT

Regarding placement of the conduit on Post Road, First Selectwoman Klein said that she called CL&P and asked them not to begin the project yet.

Other

On July 21st, First Selectwoman Klein said that Governor Rell would hold a “meet and greet” session from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. On July 27th from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., there would be a full walk-through of Pear Tree Beach.

On Saturday, August 7th at 11:00 a.m. there would be a dedication in front of Town Hall which everyone should have already received an invitation to. She said that she would meet further to discuss an appropriate spot for the statute. The entire project would cost approximately \$10,000. The area was level, which meant that placement would require minimal effort.

First Selectwoman Klein spoke about the situation at Holly Pond. Approximately \$900,000 has been secured to dredge a portion of the pond. She said that this item would be discussed at future meetings.

Regarding parking fees, First Selectwoman Klein said that this would be discussed at the next meeting. An increase would need to be proposed to the public.

First Selectwoman Klein said that the Depot’s annual report was available in the office for anyone to read.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER’S REPORT

Mr. Crary said that, at the owner’s request, he visited the property at 10 Spring Grove Street. Water runoff from the street above her property was causing many problems. The owner joined with others in the neighborhood and offered to pay the cost for putting in a drainage system. Mr. Crary said that the next step would be to pursue engineering work, and the topic would be brought back for the Board’s discussion. He said he would meet again with the owner on August 3rd. He said that he has already spoken to Mr. Fox about the legality.

Mrs. Santarella asked what the impact would be on the boat club; Mr. Crary said that fixing the problem at 10 Spring Grove would have no effect on the new boat club ramp. He said that the boat club could not do any work unless the Board approved it. They would need to submit plans for approval of Park & Recreation and then obtain Board approval.

NEW BUSINESS

High School Building Committee

Mr. Maglathlin said that the Committee was formed four years ago. Twenty months into the project it was 2/3 complete and he was happy to admit, on schedule. He said that he didn't foresee any problem in the future; completion date was scheduled for May 2005. There would be many changes made in the next couple of months, and the school would be completely closed in by October 15, 2004. Mr. Maglathlin said that 165 trades are on the job, full time. He said that the last three buildings – the auditorium, the main classrooms and the library – are all closed in. The gymnasium is finished. Basketball equipment has been installed; electrical work is state of the art, and occupancy is planned for the spring. Mr. Maglathlin said that work would begin on the track this week. All bids were received within budget. He said that it is expected that the first football game would be played at the end of September; bleachers have already been installed. Mr. Maglathlin said that the baseball field is level and grading is complete. Landscaping on the northern side of the school is finished.

Mr. Maglathlin said that one of the neighbors continues to complain about the time that work begins in the morning, but nothing is being done illegally. Work does not start before 7:00 a.m. There is a sufficient amount of buffer between the school and the neighbor's property, and it appeared the neighbor was trying to be reasonable.

Mr. Maglathlin referred to an article in the New York Times about the cost of the project. Raw material, steel, imported from China was very expensive. \$250,000 extra was spent on steel for studs, painting and sheet rock. He said that value engineering would be used wherever possible. \$700,000 remains in the contingency that can be used over the next 12 months. He said that costs are being watched very closely as the project needed to be brought in on budget.

Mr. Maglathlin said that the gymnasium would be available for after-school sports programs; this area is considered finished as only carpeting remained to be installed.

Gorham's Pond Dam and Tide Gate

Mr. Steeger said that, by an agreement that was over 100 years old, Darien has been responsible for maintenance of the Gorham Pond dam. The dam itself has been passing more water recently than it has in the past. Consultants were hired and divers found large voids in the walls. Mr. Steeger said that an additional \$39,000 would be required to pursue the problem in greater detail, and there are no funds currently in the budget for this. A supplemental appropriation is being sought so that the project can proceed. It should be done under a certificate of permission, which he hoped could be obtained from the DEP within the next 90 days.

Mr. Steeger said that the money would be used for design plans for replacement of the tide gate and replacement of the sluiceway and regulatory processes that are required at the State and local level. \$39,000 would cover the cost of the engineering work, not the project. He explained construction of the dam and the extent of the replacement needed, and said that there would be no visual change.

First Selectwoman Klein asked Mr. Steeger what the timing was, in light of the fact that the Board was not prepared to vote tonight. He responded that the project should begin as soon as possible, but understand that it would probably be next year. First Selectwoman Klein said that this item would be placed on next month's agenda. Mr. Steeger said that he was not yet sure of the total cost of the project. Mr. Tully thanked the Board members for working with the DPW and recognizing their responsibilities. He said that a clean up of the dam would also be part of the project. He said that he would keep the Board informed.

2004/2005 Sidewalk and Walkway Options

First Selectwoman Klein said that a petition was received from residents along Mansfield Avenue, from 504 Mansfield to the school, asking for a sidewalk. She said that Brookside was originally in the budget and was cut. Work on the sidewalk is ready to begin; the Town has contributed. She said that the section from the gas station to Rings End Lumber on West Avenue was not included. Mr. Crary said that there was a timing problem because the Board would meet on August 16th but plans would be required before that. Mr. Steeger said that a complete survey would be required on Brookside. This could take six weeks to two months to obtain. First Selectwoman Klein asked for a "sense of the Board" opinion regarding handicapped access on West Avenue and Edgerton. Mr. Steeger said that it could be a simple rehab job but a commitment letter would be required from someone in charge. First Selectwoman Klein said that the sidewalk project on Mansfield would cost approximately \$200,000 - \$250,000 and could perhaps be done in sections out of next year's budget.

Sewer Commission and Their Activities

Mr. Van Sciver said that work on Long Neck Point and Pear Tree Point roads was just completed. The main pipe and all laterals are in and in the process of getting paved. The water company still needed to complete their work at Pear Tree. The Sewer Commission's next project would be at Zieglers; the entire estate would have sewers installed. Plans have been drawn up and would be sent out to bid. Mr. Steeger expressed concern about not being able to get enough hookups. Mr. Van Sciver said that 30% of the residents would be required for proper operation; he had no doubt that there would be at least 30% interest. He said that the Boat Club would hook up at its own discretion.

Mr. Van Sciver said that there would be a meeting on July 20th to discuss extending the sewer to the end of Five Mile River and Davis Lane. He said that of 6,592 residents, 4,327 have committed to hooking up to Town sewers. The \$106 million project would be bonded at 15%. He said that an engineering firm would look at Stony Brook. The 12" pipe would need to be replaced with an 18" one; the amp on the pump would need to increase to 100 from 75. Ms. Russell asked how much the pump would cost at the Boat Club. Mr. Van Sciver said it would cost approximately \$4,000 - \$5,000; approximately 15 years would pass before maintenance would be needed.

Deer Management Committee

Mr. Haydock said that he has been a member of the Fairfield County Municipal Deer Management Alliance for the past seven years. The Alliance has been successful in their attempts to manage the deer population without spending large sums of money. He said that the states of North Carolina and Georgia began their attempts years before Connecticut did and have thus far spent a great deal more money. Mr. Haydock said that many people have registered complaints that deer have damaged the environment. They feed on plants and trees which then stop growing. He said that deer are difficult to corral, and they cannot be caged. In addition to damaging landscape, Mr. Haydock said that they pose a danger to road travelers and cause many accidents each year that are not reported. He said that the DEP has considered the spawning deer population to be a serious and ongoing problem. Lastly, deer carry ticks on them that cause lime disease. Tick larvae hatch in June and July, and once a human is bitten, treatment should begin within 30 days to be effective. Mr. Haydock said that smaller animals carry the tick that causes lime disease, but the tick must be on a deer. Mr. Haydock said that a doe will produce approximately 24 offspring in her lifetime, so that potentially the deer population could double each year. Contraception costs about \$500 per deer. Additionally, deer attract coyotes. Mr. Haydock said that it is expensive (about \$200) to dispose of a deer once it is dead, and the question continues as to where it should be buried. If it died on a State road, who would be responsible for the burden of payment and disposal? Mr. Haydock said that all indicators are that the only way to control deer is to hunt them. He said that two years

ago a law was passed to extend the hunting season from December 31 to January 31. Last year, baiting became allowable. Mr. Haydock said that perhaps Darien could propose that hunting be allowed at some of the woodland park areas. Homeowners could be asked their preference regarding this.

First Selectwoman Klein said that she agreed the deer were a serious problem and that management of them required ongoing attention. She said that this item would be put on future agendas and explored further. Mr. Harrel said that someone should speak to the Town's liability carrier about this problem.

Downtown Darien Committee

Mr. Geary, chairman of Business Development Committee for Darien, said that he met with a group of people at Town Hall for ongoing discussion of the plans for Darien. He said that a survey was done in the past and ideas were presented to P & Z but not much ever became of it. He said that much information has already been obtained from outside groups regarding what Darien could do to address its issue of traffic, particularly vehicular and pedestrian traffic flow, and in general, how to improve the downtown area. He said that a great deal of research on the same issues was undertaken in upper Connecticut. The non-profit consultant group that is being used felt that Darien was a prime candidate for downtown renovation of sorts. The next step would be to form a steering committee of about 15, comprised of property owners, business entrepreneurs, etc. who would attend a conference on September 17 to learn more about the consulting group and how they go about doing their business. He suggested holding a Town Meeting on September 22nd. On October 1st there would be a workshop to review the application process. Mr. Geary said that Fairfield County applied and was accepted.

First Selectwoman Klein spoke highly of the group, saying they suggest and recommend ways that a town can attract visitors and residents. Their presentation would include visuals and economic data. Perhaps the Town could consider perpendicular parking to alleviate some of its traffic congestion, or suggest to business owners that they have outside café tables in front of their establishments. She said that the group could charge a nominal fee, say \$2,000, but this would be well worth it. She said that the group would bring in a resource team at no cost to Darien. She said that she would contact them so that this effort could be moved forward.

Mr. Crary said that the organization patterns itself after the National Trust for Historical Places, and they work toward making downtown areas strong enough to be able to keep old buildings. Each state who is interested sets up their own "main street" type organization. The concept was created by CL&P from the Connecticut State of Economics

Development for grants. They assist municipalities to improve their downtown areas. A major commitment of time is required initially, and funding after that.

Mr. Geary reiterated that Darien desperately needs to be involved with this. Potential business enterprises might be skipping past Darien because of its lack luster in the downtown area. First Selectwoman Klein said that she was excited by the three new businesses that are opening on the Post Road.

Draft Charter Amendments

Mr. Cray said that an amendment was being proposed that would improve the Town's Code of how it handles purchasing. Currently, each department does its own purchasing up to \$5,000, and then the item goes to formal bid. The proposal would increase the limit to \$10,000. The second amendment would be to "piggy-back" on the purchasing power of surrounding municipalities to take advantage of getting a better price because the volumes would be higher. He said that a good example of this was buying fuel oil. Both changes were designed to streamline the purchasing process.

First Selectwoman Klein said that these changes would be passed to the RTM for their approval. Dr. Miceli expressed concern in the change from \$5,000 to \$10,000, saying that costs would increase because the cap was higher.

Regarding Town pensions, Mr. Cray said that there was a problem a few months ago relating to a person not being vested until they reached a tenure of 10 years. He said that he spoke with the actuarial company who felt that if a person was employed for 35 years or had reached the age of 65 they should be able to retire on full pension with no penalty. He said that the Town's current pension plan is somewhat confusing. Dr. Miceli suggested that some things could be deleted. First Selectwoman Klein said that this item would be put on the Board's next agenda for a vote.

Peter Treubner from the pension group said that the entire document should be rewritten. Mrs. Santarella said that the Board was not prepared to take any action at tonight's meeting; First Selectwoman Klein agreed.

Police Department Transfer

- ** MR. HARREL MOVED THE TRANSFER OF \$5,200 FROM ACCOUNT NO. A03322221 81001 TO ACCOUNT NO. A0332313 83004.**
- ** DR. MICELI SECONDED THE MOTION.**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

REAPPOINTMENTS

Housing Authority / Youth Commission

**** MR. HARREL MOVED TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING
REAPPOINTMENTS:**

**CYNTHIA ASHBURNE TO THE HOUSING AUTHORITY FOR A TERM
EXPIRING JUNE 30, 2008 AND KEELEY KRISKEY TO THE YOUTH
COMMISSION FOR A TERM EXPIRING ON MARCH 31, 2007.**

**** MRS. SANTARELLA SECONDED THE MOTION.
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business to discuss.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. HARREL MOVED TO ADJOURN.
** MRS. SANTARELLA SECONDED THE MOTION.
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol A. Wiggins for
Telesco Secretarial Services